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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SENIOR EUFOR COMMANDERS QUESTION DEFENSE REFORM
PROGRESS

Classified By: Amb. McElhaney for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (C) Summary. We met with senior EUFOR commanders October 16 to discuss EUFOR drawdown plans and the future of the EUFOR mission in Bosnia. During the discussions, the Deputy EUFOR commander (DCOM) and EUFOR chief of staff expressed skepticism at the pace of defense reform in Bosnia, and questioned the political will among Bosnian leaders to move the process forward. They indicated that EUFOR's role in getting the process back on track would be limited. The DCOM also said that the decision to drawdown EUFOR forces may slip by several months. End summary.

DEFENSE REFORM STALLED?

12. (C) The EUFOR DCOM, British Brigadier-General Nigel Alwyn-Foster, and EUFOR Chief of Staff, German Brigadier-General Klaus Hollmann, told us that they perceived that Bosnian defense reform was stalled. BG Alwyn-Foster said that the recent inability of the Ministry of Defense to meet its self-imposed deadline of October 1 to implement personnel decisions was perhaps indicative of a broader lack of energy behind the defense reform process. BG Hollmann also agreed with this assessment, and questioned the commitment of Bosnian leaders to implement the reform agenda.

13. (C) While willing to critique the current state of affairs, neither general was able to offer any suggestions as to how to re-invigorate the process. BG Hollmann deflected on this point, and noted that defense reform was the mandate of NATO and not EUFOR, and said he did not see a clear role for EUFOR in driving the process. BG Alwyn-Foster noted that EUFOR drawdown was tied to the existence of a lasting "safe and secure environment" in the country, but did not think stalled defense reform called this state into question. He tied defense reform implementation to the leadership at the MOD, saying he hoped to see a re-newed commitment to the reform on their part.

EUFOR PLANS

14. (C) BG Alwyn-Foster said that the decision to drawdown EUFOR ("re-configure" in his words) would probably slip from December to March. He said that Brussels had decided last week that it would be premature to issue a drawdown order

without knowing the full effects of the Kosovo final status decision in Bosnia. BG Alwyn-Foster questioned the rationale of tying the EUFOR transition in Bosnia to a "regional issue." BG Hollmann said that he was satisfied with EUFOR participants' troop contributions, and that, on the whole, countries were meeting their commitments (Note: We have heard elsewhere that some countries have not filled their planned rotations. End Note.) He said that his only cause for concern was that Portugal might not be able to meet its previous rotation commitment.

15. (C) According to BG Alwyn-Foster and EUFOR POLAD Alicia Forsyth, EUFOR has conducted polling to gauge public attitudes about the drawdown of the international military presence. The polls exposed a certain level of public anxiety, particularly among Bosniaks, about the transition. Forsyth said that this should be an impetus to move forward on police reform, and she hoped all parties would recognize the importance of police reform in light of the planned EUFOR drawdown and resultant security vacuum in Bosnia (Comment: It is telling that EU officials view police, and not defense, reform from this angle. From our perspective, successful implementation of defense reform and the creation of a credible, single Armed Forces would go a long way to fill any security void. End comment.)

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COMMENT: LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS ON DEFENSE REFORM
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16. (C) The concerns on defense reform raised by the EUFOR leadership are legitimate. We have now moved into the second phase of defense reform, where the will of Bosnian political and military leaders to implement the reforms adopted by law will take prime importance. While before the international

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community, and particularly the office of the NATO POLAD, was able to successfully gain agreement on defense reform legislation, force structure, and initial implementation, the Bosnians themselves must now take on responsibility in this process. The main delay is in activating 29 selection commissions to fill all the newly-defined positions in the MOD and AFBIIH. The two deputy ministers of defense -- Beserbasic (Bosniak) and Pendes (Croat) -- are once again the chief culprits. As a result, the MOD has missed its self-imposed deadline to make its personnel decisions, a key step in the reform process. The MOD has offered a host of excuses for this delay, including distractions due to the election campaign, the summer holiday schedule, and even the passing of Minister Radovanovic's father. It is not yet clear if the slip was merely a bump in the road or indicative of larger institutional or philosophical problems with the reform agenda. Minister Radovanovic has expressed great frustration at the lack of activity, apparently caused by a general slowdown of people concerned about the elections. It is clear, however, that the process has indeed slowed and could use an internal or external push to get back on track. End comment.

MCELHANEY